

## **Displaced Children and Orphans Fund: Democratic Republic of the Congo**

### **Separated and Abandoned Children Program**

**Implementing Partner:** Save the Children UK

**Funding Period:** July 2003 – July 2006

**Amount:** \$1,500,000

**Purpose:** Reduce and prevent the separation and abandonment of children.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- \$ 600 children reunified with families (80 to 85 percent remained with families six months later).
- \$ Served 500 parents with parental skills workshops.
- \$ Trained 400 social workers during more than 20 sessions in the areas of social and legal protection of children.
- \$ Reached 10,000 persons in vulnerable communities.
- \$ Provided awareness/sensitivity training to 200 pastors and preachers during workshops.
- \$ Some 300 children are receiving basic care in residential homes or alternative care.

### **Separated and Abandoned Children Program**

**Implementing Partner:** Pact (Prime), with subgrantees Human Dignity in the World and Collectif National des Operateurs Sociaux pour Enfants Necessitant des Mesures Speciales de Protection (National Collective of Specialists for Children Needing Special Measures of Protection)

**Funding Period:** Feb. 2003 – Feb. 2006

**Amount:** \$1,500,000

**Purpose:** Prevent child abandonment among targeted households and reintegrate street children into their families.

#### **Accomplishment:**

- \$ Formed 25 solidarity groups, each involving 25 households at risk of abandoning their children (625 households benefited).
- \$ Assisted 22 solidarity groups in implementing their selected economic development activity (producing crops, owning livestock, or owning a restaurant). The average cost per project was \$5,000. Roughly 60 percent of the most active project participants are women.
- \$ Selected and trained 45 peer counselors, each of whom has provided ongoing counseling support to five families for over nine months.

- \$ Established three Child Protection Networks; six more are being organized and others will follow shortly.

### **Separated and Abandoned Children Program**

**Implementing Partner:** World Vision, Inc.

**Funding Period:** April 2003 – April 2006

**Amount:** \$999,738

**Purpose:** Improve the status of separated and abandoned children in the target communities of North-Kivu province, Mutwanga and Oicha Health Zones.

#### **Accomplishments:**

- \$ Identified 1,644 separated or abandoned children.
- \$ Developed 10 community child protection committees (CPCs).
- \$ Trained CPC and community leaders on more than 15 child-related topics.
- \$ Trained more than 1,000 teachers on children's rights.
- \$ Signed Memoranda of Understanding with three health zone departments to secure free health care for separated or abandoned children in exchange for assistance through in-kind gifts.
- \$ Distributed in-kind gifts (school supplies, clothing, shoes, etc.) in schools.
- \$ Rehabilitated eight schools, benefiting 46 separated or abandoned children and 60 students.
- \$ Increased the school enrollment rate among separated or abandoned children to 60 percent.
- \$ Traced 511 separated or abandoned children and reunited 32 children (within the project area only).
- \$ Hosted more than 1,000 host families participating in the gardening program.
- \$ Engaged 681 host families in small livestock activities.

Since its independence in 1960, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC) has been affected by widespread government corruption, mismanagement, and political instability.

In addition, ongoing conflict has directly or indirectly led to the death of over 3 million people and the displacement of more than 2 million since 1996. Looting by army and militias, abduction of adults and children, and gender-based violence have exacerbated already high levels of poverty, displacement, illness, and malnutrition. These conditions have hindered the development of reliable public services to protect children.

Thousands of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are separated from their families—numbers range from an estimated 7,000 children in Mbuyi Mayi to 20,000 to 30,000 in Kinshasa. Systematic killing of children is not uncommon. Separation and abuse are aggravated by cases where children are institutionalized or accused of witchcraft by revivalist churches and subject to violence as a result.

USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund supports three grantees in different regions of the country to address the needs of separated or abandoned children and those who live on the streets.

In two major urban areas—Kinshasa and Mbuyi Mayi—Save the Children of the United Kingdom and 16 local NGOs work to reunite separated children with their families or strengthen the protective environments for children who cannot be reunified. The program enlists and trains families, civil society, and the government. Activities include skills training for parents and sensitivity/awareness training among religious leaders and local authorities. The project also works with the government to reform policies and laws protecting children.

Lubumbashi lies near the southernmost tip of the country. Here, roughly 2,000 children are working on the streets, 800 of whom live there. This number has been steadily increasing since the mid-1980s. Pact's USAID-funded initiative AMKENI—from a Swahili name that means “wake up”—is testing a new psychosocial approach for preventing child abandonment. AMKENI focuses on 25 neighborhoods in Katuba, Kampemba, and Kenya, the poorest communities of Lubumbashi. Since the intervention began, none of the target households have abandoned a child. Furthermore, six of the 12 street children who originated from these families have been reintegrated into their households. All six have now been at home for more than six months.

Because divorce is a risk factor for child abandonment, Pact's psychosocial component has put considerable emphasis on reconciling divorced couples. To date, 11 of the 18 divorced couples (among the 325 households participating in the first phase of the program) have reconciled. Three of the couples face difficulty, but so far, no new divorces have occurred.

USAID's third initiative in DROC focuses on eastern regions that have been the hardest hit in the ongoing conflicts. North Kivu province alone accounts for about 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), most of whom are from Ituri. A significant number of the IDPs and returned host population are children. Many were separated from families while fleeing; others have been abandoned by their parents for social and economic reasons. The USAID project, implemented by World Vision, operates in the two administrative health zones of Mutwanga and Oicha. The project works through child protection committees made up of community members to improve physical and social conditions for separated and abandoned children.

One component of the program—designed to improve the economic situations of families, host families, and communities—helps children and families establish home gardens and small livestock businesses. Host mothers benefiting from income-generation activities organized themselves in Rural Women Committees (RWC). The project collaborates with local government structures and other national and international NGOs and agencies including the local child protection platform, Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center, Save the Children/UK, UNICEF, and the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization.

The program has also worked with local health structures to provide free health services to separated and abandoned children, and with education structures to assist in enrolling children in school.